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——— Spesne salutem
Ausus, et afflictis melius confidere rebus.

VIRGIL.

Even yet, we hope returning health to bless,
And see a glorious prospect of redress.

ANON.

The course pursued by pedagogues in teaching the dead languages to children has been the subject of much stricture and disputation. It is our present intention to elucidate a few incontestable truths, which, we conceive, will stand the brunt of all the artillery of pedants and all the small shot of common whippers-in of learning. We

shall confine our remarks to the Latin lan-
guage, and the manner in which it is generally
taught.

The youth of our country generally be-
gin their course at the age of ten years; and,
at eighteen are made batchelors of arts. Eight
years, and generally a longer time, are given
to the study of the Latin tongue. This period,
considered as the ninth part of a long life,
presents a formidable catalogue of months
and weeks. Is it well employed? Supposing
the student of capable parts, liberal connexion
and destined to make a figure in the enlar-
ged character of his country; that portion of
life in the commencement of its career, could
not be devoted to a more useful acquisi-
tion. Without a knowledge of the Roman
language, there must be an immense and
dreary blank in mental chronology - the
progress of the different dialects of nations,
their connexion and their meaning, must be
imperfectly understood - and, instead of being
master of the materials by which his living
thoughts are to be built up and exhibited to
the gaze of ages, a writer must borrow them

from fallacious lexicographers, who when most successful must be even mistaken in many important particulars. Instead of giving the rising pyramid, symmetry and polished beauty, by his knowledge of the quantities and proportions of the parts, he must pin his faith on the nauseous affectation and exquisite ignorance of some piddling dictator in the science of pronunciation.

All this is however unnecessary. It is feebly attempting to prove, what no one of common intelligence denies. Let us return then to the profit gained by the eight years' application to the study of the Latin language;—and, as we are speaking of the abstract advantages shall not take into consideration the waste of time and talent, occasioned by the temptations of other pursuits and the perversity of idleness. What then, is the mass of intelligence acquired in this long preliminary probation? The answer suggests many melancholy reflections. The student has read a little of Cæsar, Sallust and Livy; a little of Virgil and Horace. Perhaps, if he has felt ~~a little~~ more curious than others, he has looked at Ovid and Terence. A few of

Cicero's orations and a transient gleaning from his other works make up the mighty catalogue. And are these authors digested? Are their maxims remembered, their principles thought of, examined, rejected or practised upon? The question need alas! no answer.

The causes of this fearful waste of time are to be found originally in the defects of education. Instead of lightening the difficulties which present themselves at the threshold of the study, the modern manner: ican system increases and multiplies them, until the impetuosity of some is quenched, the coldness of others changed into rooted aversion.

The more we read, the more we desire to read. This is a maxim, well established indeed, but rarely practised upon. A book which at first wearied and disgusted us, if really excellent in its kind, will infallibly gain ground on our attention if we persevere in fixing it on the chain of thought and following up the progress of its system. It is remarked by Henry Kirke White in one of his letters, that after reading Blackstone

commentaries for some hours, he has laid down the book with regret, which he took up with listlessness and aversion. We apply this to the Latin language, whose authors can never fail to interest in their native garb, when we understand its texture. We say then, let the student read—let him be gently enforced to read at first—let him read much, constantly and methodically;—as the intellect opens, let the exercise have as little as may be, the appearance of a task—let his ardour never be checked and his bound never prescribed, when he begins to be inspired with the afflatus divinus, that breathe and burns in the productions of antiquity.

But what is the tendency of our scholastic discipline? At the entrance of the student upon the language, a grammar is put in his hands, the necessary handmaiden of knowledge. This should surely be as simple, as concise and as plain as possible; while it should be philosophical in its basis, the mind of the student of tender years

should not be disgusted with reasonings he cannot follow and distinctions he cannot comprehend. Of this however, we need not speak; for of the Latin grammars which have been put into our own hands, none were we believe ever suspected of being at all philosophical. A complete grammar, with its hosts of rules and catalogues of exceptions, should not be put into the hands of a boy at first; it may be beaten into him till his antipathy, natural to all similar pursuits, and more powerful in this than in any other, has been rooted inseparably in his breast, and the hopes of his progress forever extinguished: but with an elementary treatise of much less bulk and more general in its rules, the student may be enabled to begin translation. Experience will gradually make grammar familiar to him; and the study of that which before had disgusted, he will now seek with avidity, and master with facility

and delight.

We will not take upon ourselves to dictate any rules for the composition of such a grammar; but we are nevertheless of the opinion, that many things now crowded into the ~~common~~ grammars in common use, might be omitted much to the advantage of the young beginner. We would instance the long lists of exceptions and variations, which only confuse the memory, and which are acquired after a while by practice, or the use of a higher grammar when the mind becomes more ripened. The whole body of syntax, both of concord and government, might, in such a work, be compressed into twelve or twenty rules at the farthest. In this manner, the simple principles of grammar would be conveyed to the mind with ease, unburthened by those tedious details, which only serve to disgust

and discourage.

When the student has passed the rudiments of instruction, and begins to translate, the manner of conducting his education is still extremely deficient. He is directed, not the classical purity of the Latin tongue, not to the language of Rome in her days of elegance, but to the productions of modern writers, which can certainly possess neither the flow nor the idiom of the Latin language. Such books as Lordey, Selectæ è veteri, Historiæ Sacræ, Viri Romæ, and others that might be mentioned, are put into his hands, and form the elements of his knowledge. The just course would be, to begin at the classical authors at once; to draw from the beginning from the sources of purity & elegance, not from the muddy stream of modern Latinity.

As a general principle also, we

think, that ~~learned~~ the use of translations is injurious to the learner. They neither improve his taste, nor advance his knowledge. Instead of going to the glittering font for his instruction, he gains it through the channels of another language; in which much of its peculiarity must necessarily be lost. Besides this, the knowledge of the language is materially retarded; the translation is relied upon, and the dictionary neglected. The voice of universal experience shews this to be the truth; and let no man ever think to make his pupils either deep or lasting scholars, unless he banishes translations from their access.

With regard to the making of latin, it should by no means be neglected, either in prose or verse. The idioms of a language can never be acquired by mere translation into our mother tongue, notwithstanding the arguments of a new refiner on modern instruction, who has arisen to astonish the natives with ~~his~~ the novelty of his plan. If

is by turning our vernacular tongue into Latin, that we can alone acquire an accurate knowledge of it. The little nicetics of the language are then discovered, and an use found for those ~~little~~ idiomatic elegancies with which every language abounds. The making of Latin verse is also of great importance In England, the students of the schools are required to write both Greek, Latin, and English verse, as well as prose compositions. By this means, they acquire that command of language, and that facility of expression, which never deserts them. They attain an elegance & a beauty of diction, to be gained in no other way; and beautiful indeed are some of the specimens which we have seen among the published productions of the pupils of the colleges & public schools of Great Britain. In our own country, it is to be lamented, that it is but little attended to.

We might enter into a further detail of our ideas respecting the

system of our education; but shall only notice ~~further~~ the little that is done in the number of years usually employed in the study of the dead languages. It is surprising how few authors are read in the eight or ten years usually devoted to these studies. Were they properly employed, were the students led on with due discrimination and prudence, they might, before the close of their term, make themselves masters of the greater portion of the Greek & Roman historians; be well read in their contemporary philosophers, and listen to the music of nearly all the minstrels of antiquity. Thus would their general information be advanced, while they made no slow progress in the acquisition of the languages. Their minds would be well stored with these ideas, & they would come out into the world not as now, comparatively ignorant, but rich in classic lore, and abounding in information.

Till some radical change can

be effected in the system of education in our country, we can never expect to see either great or elegant scholars. It may be truly said, that there have been scarcely any men of real learning to illumine and adorn our land. A few have indeed existed; — but they only served to shew the surrounding darkness, and to make us regret, that they were so few. With all the joyful prophecy of hope, may we not be indulged in predicting that as the country advances in arts, & population, as learning comes more in demand, and as literary enterprize becomes more successful, that our systems of education will change, and our colleges be like their models in the eastern hemisphere, the nurse, & genius, and the source of all that can adorn, & beautify, and embellish human nature? ——

S.E.